

*I always hated these kinds of places*, Bentre's eye flitted across the squalid scene before him. The streets were filled with rabble the likes of which he hoped to never see after Nar Shadda. Taking out a shiny new datapad, he began to scribble down some notes and made a few quick sketches. Nicer than his usual datapad, the device also had a small holorecorder nestled in its depths. It possessed more memory than his old piece, so the Sith was constantly recording. Trying to act as nonchalant as possible, the Battlemaster swept the camera across his field of vision.

"All this is a terrible shame 'ennit?" A hunched over man bumped into the Corellian, and almost immediately Stahoes nose was assaulted by the odor of unwashed flesh and booze. As he turned, a scowl of annoyance twisting at the corner of his mouth, he saw the man's eyes widen for a moment. "Oh yeah, you are about as mad as the rest of us, aren'tcha?" The man nodded a few times slowly. "It is hard seeing how far a man's home can fall. It's not as though *they* cared enough to do anything about it all."

Blinking a few times in an effort to regain his composure, Bentre locked eyes with the man. "What do you mean by *they* exactly?"

"Are you daft boy? I am talking about the ones heading the Orian, the ones who dismantled Dlarit and who lord over us to this day. I am talking about those bloody cultists! They left us to languish, and now all these little gangs started setting up shop in the midst of the carnage. That brought the real dangerous elements into our home. The trouble is that once those vermin make a home, it can be as difficult as hells to extract them. Lots of people get killed, in the fire and the crossfire."

"Well," Stahoes drew out the word, now glancing around a bit, trying to look as frazzled as possible, "I can understand your anger but I don't see what one man can do to change the course of a whole planet."

"It ain't about the planet boy..." the man's words trailed off into silence.

"What is it about then?" Bentre was more than a bit intrigued at this point. He leaned back on the balls of his feet as he waited for the man.

"The problem is that the heart of the people just isn't in it anymore. They are broken and all those cultists do is carry on with their own nonsense. People get killed and they can't lift a finger to help a man just to get by."

"So what sort of help do you expect folks to give?"

"I dinnae," the man's voice became wistful for a moment, "but maybe you can help me a bit if you got some extra credits. Would you perhaps fancy buying a sad old codger a drink to chase his woes away?"

“Ah. so that is what this all is about.” Bentre rolled his eyes.

“Just a wee bit so I can get through another hard day. There isn’t much more to hope for with the city is as sad a state as it is. Just help out old Sanj.”

“Fine,” the Sith reached toward his wallet. Withdrawing a few credit chips, he tossed them loftily to the old man. Aged eyes widened as the man reached up and snatched the creds from the air.

“Thank ye young man.” Without saying another word, Sanj scurried down the road, the promise of comforting inebriation driving his steps. Bentre watched for a few moments before turning his attention back to the datapad. The whole time this exchange had been going on, the old man had garnered no attention that Stahoes had noticed from any of the others in the street.

*Was he just some old drunk? A man off his rocker and out of the care of his loving family? An old Dlarit veteran past his prime? Does he really reflect the feelings of the people of the city?* The questions churned in the Shadow’s mind for several moments as he sketched out the street plans and made a few notes. In any case he was sure that Muz would be interested in finding out a bit more about these gangs.

*Nine Hells, if I get a chance I might just take care of some of the cute tykes. I am sure I could scatter at least a few of them if I showed them some of the loving-kindness that Garan showed some of his associates.* The thought brought a bitter attempt at a smile that ended in a tight scowl to the man’s lips.

“Hey you!” A gravelly voice called from somewhere behind Stahoes. Bentre turned to regard the speaker. A roughly-dressed youth was approaching the Corellian, with a blaster pistol clenched tightly in his hand. “I saw you talking to Sanj. I saw you give him credits. I don’t recall you sharing any of your wealth with the rest of the undercity. Don’t tell me you thought you could trek into the territory of the Kalabrek Kings without paying the proper toll.”

The Sith could feel his own hand twitch as he looked at the weapon. It wouldn’t take much to shoot this kid. All it would take is a quick draw and three successive shots to ensure this kid wouldn’t be a problem anymore. However, he found his gaze drawn to the people in the streets. If the gangs were bad in Kar Alabrek would he end up drawing a lot of attention to himself? How quickly would assistance come to this punk? Realizing the potential situation he left himself in, Bentre reconsidered.

“Hey, is that the DC-17 with the hair trigger?”

“What?” The kid seemed rather taken aback. “Well, n-no it’s a DC-15.” The punk wondered at this man’s jib in spite of having a blaster pointed at him.

“Oh nice, I had one of those some time ago. I really prefer the kick of the S-5 though.” As Bentre spoke the words he began to inch closer. “I bet that thing gets the job done pretty well though, doesn’t it?”

“It works well enough, sure.” The kid was become more relaxed now.

“Ah,” Stahoes stepped forward slowly, closing the distance between the two, “so did you rebuild the trigger assembly then?”

“No, I just-” the words were cut short as Bentre stepped forward, grabbing the barrel of the blaster and forcing it sideways. With a grunt the Sith smacked his head into the punk’s, prompting a crack followed by a cry of pain.

“Don’t think you can hold me up like that, kid. Though maybe you can help me. I figure you got some buddies, and Sanj tells me that you have been making hell for the people of the city. Introduce us and I will let you go with maybe just a broken nose for your troubles.”